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**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS**

**United States Department of Agriculture and State  
Agricultural Colleges, Cooperating**

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**BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUB WORK**

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**POULTRY MITES AND LICE**

**Prepared by the Animal Husbandry Division, Bureau of Animal Industry,  
United States Department of Agriculture**



**Dusting a Hen with Insect Powder to Kill Lice.**

**CIRCULAR 14**

**Office of Extension Work, North and West  
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## POULTRY MITES AND LICE.

**T**HE presence of mites and lice on poultry has a very marked effect on the number of chicks raised and the number of eggs produced by the laying hens. Thousands of chicks die every spring and summer as the result of lice, and in most cases such a loss could have been prevented. It is a familiar sight, that of the hen squatting in a hole of dust, scratching and fluttering her feathers in an effort to get rid of these insect pests.

### MITES.

Chicken mites, or, as they are sometimes called, the "gray" or "red" mites, are very small and naturally gray in color. After they have been on a fowl, however, and filled themselves with blood they become reddish in appearance; hence, they are sometimes called "red" mites, and at other times, when they are hungry again, "gray" mites. Mites usually stay in the cracks of the hen houses and under the roosts in the daytime, where they lay their eggs. At night, when the fowls go to roost, the mites come out of their hiding places, attach themselves to the fowls, and feed by sucking blood from the birds. This causes the fowls to become very uncomfortable, and consequently they do not thrive as they should.

### HOW TO GET RID OF MITES.

Knowing the habits and hiding places of mites, an effort should be made to get rid of them. The chicken houses should be cleaned and sprayed thoroughly, including the nests, dropping boards, and roosts. The poultry house that is kept clean and has plenty of sunlight and ventilation is usually free from mites. Two very good methods used to get rid of mites consist of either whitewashing or spraying the inside of the house.

### WHITEWASH.

An effective whitewash that has been used for this purpose is made as follows: Slack half a peck of lime and dilute it with 20 gallons of water. Add 1 pound of salt, previously dissolved in water. To this mixture add 2 quarts of crude carbolic acid, or 1 gallon of stock dip, and apply with a spray pump or brush.

### A GOOD SPRAY.

Another very effective method that can be used to kill mites is to spray the roosts, nests, and all cracks or crevices with kerosene, crude oil, or some wood preservative manufactured from coal tar. If possible, the spraying should be done with crude oil or a wood preservative rather than kerosene, inasmuch as it is necessary, when kerosene is used, to continue to spray every 10 days or two weeks throughout the warm weather. The effect of crude oil or a wood preservative is much more lasting. The time to use either of these methods is early in the spring, before the mites have a chance to increase in number and annoy the fowls.



## LICE.

The common chicken louse is larger than a mite, and is pale yellow in color. It differs from the mite also in that it spends most of its time on the body of the fowl, although sometimes it is found in the nests. The louse lays its eggs at the base of the fluffy feathers of the fowl, especially around the vent. From 6 to 10 days are required for these eggs to hatch. Lice do not suck the blood from the fowls as do the mites, but annoy the fowls by feeding on scales and secretions of the skin and parts of the feathers.

### HOW TO GET RID OF LICE.

Inasmuch as lice spend the greater part of their time on the fowls, the most effective treatment is that which is applied directly to the birds. The cleanliness of the hen house is equally as important, however, if lice are to be gotten rid of entirely. The two most practical methods of fighting lice are dusting, and using a paste or an ointment.

### DUSTING.

There are two ways in which dusting can be done: (1) Providing a good dust-box, containing a mixture of road dust and wood ashes, and allowing the hens to dust themselves; and (2) applying the dust directly to the fowls. Dusting the fowls by hand is especially recommended for sitting hens and fowls that are very much infested with lice. When applying the dust or louse powder directly, it should be worked well into the feathers with the hand, especially around the vent and under the wings (see title page). Fowls dusted in this manner should be treated a second time in about a week or ten days. A good homemade louse powder can be made as follows: Mix together

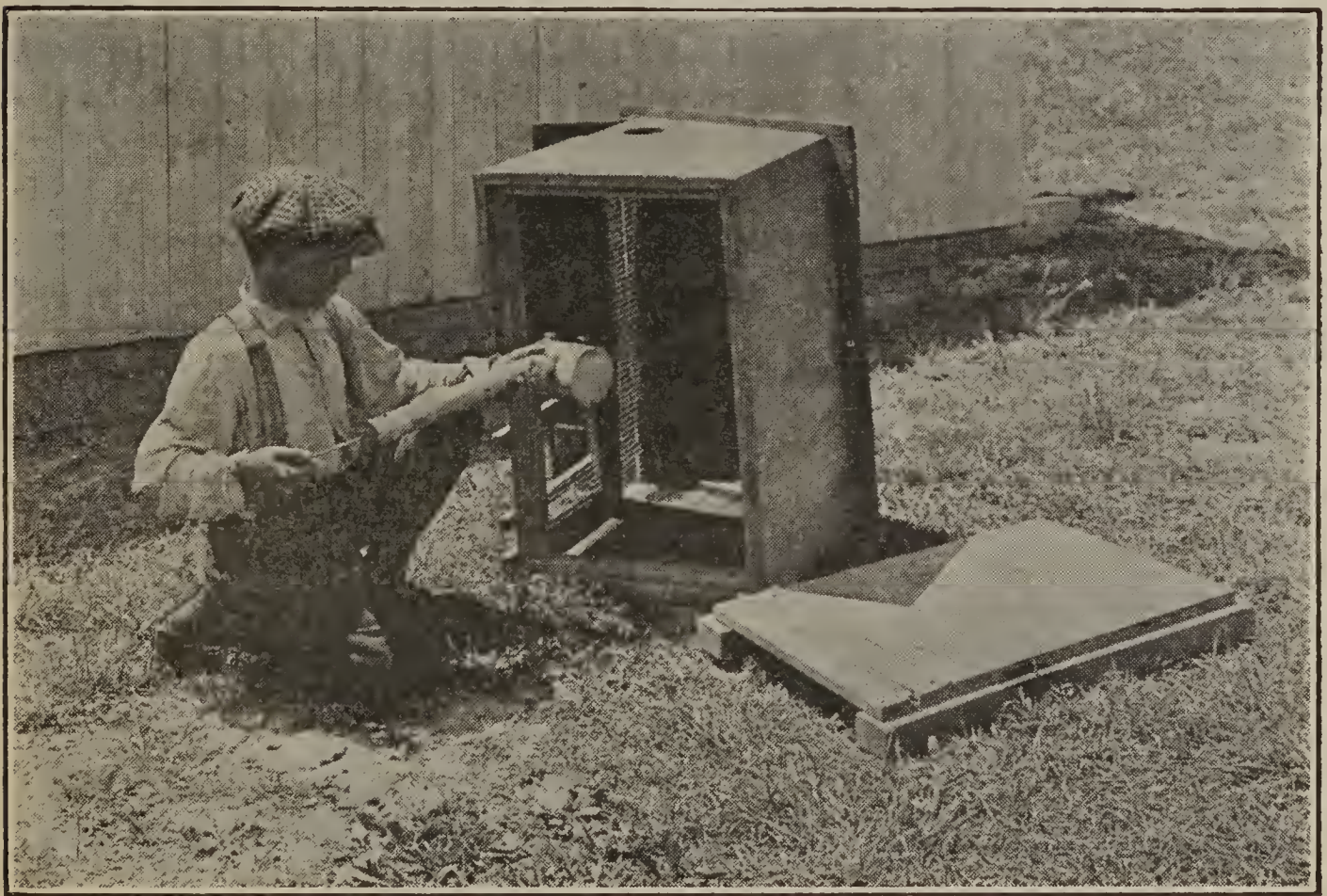


Fig. 1.—Cleaning and spraying brood coop.

1½ pints of gasoline and half a pint of crude carbolic acid. Stir this mixture thoroughly into 4 quarts of plaster of paris or land plaster. Allow it to dry and apply it as suggested above.



It has been found recently that sodium fluoride is very effective in getting rid of lice on fowls. Commercial sodium fluoride is purchased in powdered form, and sells (June, 1918) at a price ranging from 30 to 45 cents a pound. Inasmuch as a little of this powder goes a long way in accomplishing results, a pound is sufficient to treat a large number of fowls. The method of applying sodium fluoride is by taking a small pinch between the fingers and placing it down near the base of the feathers below the vent, at the base of the tail, under the wings, in the breast, and in the back of the neck. Care should be taken not to inhale the sodium fluoride powder, as it irritates the nose and throat. A damp handkerchief tied over the nose and mouth may be used by those applying the powder.

#### APPLYING OINTMENT.

One of the most effective ointments used to destroy lice in fowls is a mixture of equal parts of mercurial, or commercial blue ointment with vaseline or lard. Mix the commercial blue ointment and vaseline or lard together thoroughly, and apply a small portion of the mixture (about the size of a pea) with the finger around the vent of the fowl. Care should be taken not to get any of the ointment in the vent. It should not be used on a sitting hen, as grease on the eggs will prevent hatching.

#### HEAD LICE ON CHICKS.

Very frequently chicks that are hatched by a hen that is infested with lice likewise become infested, and frequently die when not properly attended to. As a treatment for lice on chicks, a very small portion of lard or vaseline should be applied to the top of the head, under the wings, and around the vent. Great care should be taken not to get too much grease on the chicks, as it may prove fatal. It is suggested that precautions be taken to keep chicks free from lice by dusting the mother hen thoroughly before the chickens are hatched. Either of the sprays mentioned above, or the whitewash recommended to prevent the spread of mites, will also help to keep down lice when applied to the poultry house.

NOTE.—This is one of a series of follow-up circulars (the K series) printed for the exclusive use of club members and club leaders. Persons desiring poultry literature should write to their State agricultural college or the U. S. Department of Agriculture.